Blended Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning: Its Effectiveness for Teaching Grammar

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Abstract

Online EFL teaching and learning in this COVID-19 pandemic era has been conducted synchronously and asynchronously. However, the implementation of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in the online grammar class was still scarce. Therefore, this study was conducted to know whether or not the use of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was effective for teaching grammar. This study was pre-experimental research using a one-group pretest-posttest design. The population of this study was the students in the second semester in the English department of a private university located in East Java. Because there was only one class in this second semester, the sample was the same as this population. There were fifteen students in this sample. In collecting the data, the researchers used the grammar pretest and posttest. After the data of pretest and posttest were in the normal distribution and homogeneous, the testing of hypothesis using t-test especially paired samples test was conducted. The result of this t-test showed that the Sig. (2-tailed) 0.000 was lower than 0.05. It revealed that the difference between the mean scores of pretest and posttest was significant. Thus, the use of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was effective for teaching grammar.

Keywords: *blended synchronous and asynchronous learning, effectiveness, online grammar class*

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic happened all over the world. This caused a change in every aspect of people's life including in education. The education system changed from offline learning which was held in the classroom into online learning. This shift also happened in Indonesia. The minister of education and culture of Indonesia released the regulation to conduct the teaching and learning from home to protect the Indonesian teachers and students from the spread of COVID-19 (Kemdikbud, 2020). The Indonesian government also provided a free quota of an internet for the Indonesian teachers and students as a help for conducting this online learning in Indonesia (Permendikbud No. 20, 2020). This internet quota was distributed to all Indonesian teachers and students starting from the early education level up to the higher education level.

Unfortunately, up to now the pandemic of COVID-19 has not lasted yet. In Indonesia, the teaching and learning of all courses including English as a Foreign Language have been conducted online or remotely for more than a year because of

the pandemic of COVID-19. All of the four skills and the three components of English have been taught in distance learning. Thus, the EFL teachers have to be able to design and manage their remote EFL classrooms as well as possible so that the students always enjoy joining this distance learning. It is supported by Zuhriyah & Fajarina (2021) stating that it is a demand for the EFL teachers to be creative in handling their online EFL classes.

Recent studies found that the EFL students had very slow responses during their remote EFL classes (Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2021; Nugroho, Haghegh, & Triana, 2021). There are some assumptions about why the students gave very slow responses to their EFL teachers. The first one is that the students got an internet connection problem so there was a delay when the students gave their responses (Ariyanti, 2020; Cahyani, et al., 2021; Hardiyanty et al., 2021; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2021). The result of it was that it seemed as if they did not respond to what their EFL teachers instructed or requested. The second assumption was that the students' focus on their online learning was less so that could not understand or caught what their teachers talked about so they did not respond to their teachers' questions (Yusuf & Ahmad, 2020). The following assumption was that the students felt bored with the teaching methods used in their online learning (Zuhriyah & Fajarina, 2021).

The slow response from the students was what happened in the online class of grammar in the English department of a private university located in East Java, Indonesia. This caused the students' grammar competence to be low. It was known when they did the mid-term test in the even semester in the academic year of 2021/2022. Their average grammar score was 65. Most of them could not answer the grammar test correctly. That is why most of them got poor scores. Then, the data from the questionnaires which were administered to the students after doing the mid-term test told that the students did not have the motivation to join the online grammar class. They complained about their grammar lecturer's way to teach them. The method used by that grammar lecturer looked the same as the method in the offline class so they felt not enthusiastic when listening to their lecturer's explanation. It is in line with the results of the studies by Nugroho et al. (2021) and Yulianto & Mujtahid (2021), the student's motivation and enthusiasm become less during the online teaching in this pandemic era.

However, the lecturer of grammar had to continue teaching grammar. It is because grammar is very essential in English skills. According to Effendi et al. (2017), the learners of a language have to have sufficient knowledge in the target language grammar so that they can have the good skills of that target language. It is added by Navaz & Sama (2017) who explain that grammar is closely related to the four English skills, such as speaking, reading, listening, as well as writing. Furthermore, Rao (2019) argues that grammar takes a big role when somebody communicates with others, namely in the form of oral speaking and written texts. It is strengthened by Kaur & Niwas (2016) who state that grammar is needed to boost the skills of language learners. Therefore, teaching grammar remotely in this pandemic era should be continued.

The grammar lecturer has to implement the appropriate strategy to solve the students' feeling of not having enthusiasm in the online grammar class. One of the strategies which can be used in this pandemic era is using the mixture of synchronous and asynchronous learning modes or is called as blended synchronous and asynchronous learning. Yamagata-Lynch (2014) defines blended synchronous and asynchronous learning as asynchronous learning which is completed with synchronous learning. Meanwhile, Cahyani et al. (2021) emphasize that blended

synchronous and asynchronous learning is the learning strategy that combines the strengths of two modes of online learning. It is added by Moorhouse & Wong (2022) who assume that using blended synchronous and asynchronous learning means integrating those two online learning modes into online teaching and learning.

Some studies also have investigated the use of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in the EFL context. One of them is Moallem (2015) who found that the blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in the reading class provided the highest social presence level. Then, the study by Karaaslan et al. (2018) revealed that the incorporation of synchronous and asynchronous games and activities in vocabulary learning was admitted efficient. Meanwhile, Riwayatiningsih & Sulistyani (2020) explained that the application of the combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning in their creative writing class had a positive effect. Blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in the EFL classrooms could be effectively used by minimizing those two online learning modes (Cahyani et al., 2021).

All of the previous studies above can be a proof that the use of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in online EFL learning is very beneficial. However, the implementation of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in online grammar class is still scarce. Therefore, the researchers were interested to conduct this study by implementing blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in the online grammar class in this COVID-19 pandemic era. Next, the purpose of this study was to find out whether or not the use of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was effective for teaching grammar.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a pre-experimental design, especially a one-group pretest-posttest design. This design did not have a control group. According to Gall et al. (2003), the researchers need to do three steps, such as giving the pretest to the experimental group, carrying out the treatment, and doing the posttest when they conduct this one-group pretest-posttest design. Dealing with that theory, the procedures in conducting the one-group pretest-posttest design in this study were that the experimental group was given the pretest of grammar, then, the treatment of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was carried out in the grammar class for four meetings. Two meetings were for asynchronous learning and another two meetings were implemented synchronously. After the treatment was finished, the grammar posttest was administered.

The population of this research was the students of the second semester of the English language education department in a private university located in East Java. There was one class only in this second semester so this one class directly became the sample of the research. In this case, the researchers used saturated sampling because there was only one class in the population. The total number of students in the second semester of this English department was fifteen students. They consisted of four males and eleven females.

To collect the data for this research, the pretest and post-test in grammar were used. The grammar test was in the form of sentence completions. There were ten questions on this grammar test. Before this test of grammar was used for collecting the data of this research, those ten questions had already been tested for their validity and reliability. All of the ten questions were valid and reliable. The pretest and the post-test of grammar in this study used the same questions but these questions were not discussed in the treatment. For the administration of the pretest and post-test of grammar, the researchers shared the link of Google Form which contained the ten

questions of grammar in the Google Classroom. Two scorers gave the score for the students' grammar pretest and posttest. Then, the two scores that each student were added and finally divided by two. The result of this calculation became the student's final score.

After the data which were in the form of the scores of the students' pretest and posttest in grammar were collected, these data were analyzed using statistical descriptive. It was to know their mean, median, modes, standard deviation, etc. After finishing this statistical descriptive calculation, the researchers continued to calculate the normality and the homogeneity of the data. When the data was in the normal distribution and homogeneous, the analysis was continued by comparing the mean scores of the pretest and post-test. It was intended to find out whether the difference in the pretest and post-test mean scores was significant or not. To know this difference, the t-test of paired samples test was used. If the result of this t-test shows a significant result, it means that blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was effective for teaching grammar. Meanwhile, it should be known that all the computations in this research were done using SPSS version 17.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

After the students had done the pretest of grammar, then, they were taught grammar using blended synchronous and asynchronous learning. This treatment had been carried out for four meetings. The synchronous learning in this study used Google Meet and the asynchronous learning had been conducted with the help of Google Classroom and the media provided by *app.bookcreator.com*. Meanwhile, the procedures for the implementation of the blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning in this study can be described as follows:

1. In the first meeting, the students were asked to read and listen to the grammar material which was written and completed with the recorded voice reading the story text by the grammar lecturer in the web of *app.bookcreator.com*. The story text told about the events which successively happened in the past. Meanwhile, the link of this *bookcreator* was shared with the students and they were given time for five days to read and comprehend that grammar material. The material shared in the *bookcreator* can be seen in Picture 1.


Picture 1.Grammar Material

After comprehending the grammar material given, the students had to create a summary related to the sentence patterns in the story text and the usage of those patterns. The place for sharing this *bookcreator* link and the learning instructions was on the Google Classroom. The students had to submit their summaries in the assignment menu of Google Classroom.

2. In the second meeting, the students were invited to have an online face-to-face meeting or video conference via Google Meet. In this video conference, the lecturer asked the students to read their summary having been submitted in the assignment of Google Classroom one by one. Then, the lecturer gave feedbacks on what the students had summarized. After all the students had already understood the materials, the lecturer had the students create one sentence by applying the material of grammar being studied on that day. The students read their sentences one by one and the lecturer asked them to give a direct comment on the sentence having been read by one of their friends. This session was closed by the feedback from the lecturer. Unfortunately, the picture of this activity cannot be shown here to keep the privacies of the researcher and the research participants.

3. In the third meeting, the students were given the task to write a story about their personal experience and the story had to contain the successive events in the past. The length of the story was minimally five sentences. Then, they were also invited to give comments on their friends' stories. It was whether they found the mistakes in the sentences written by their friends. This task was posted in the announcement menu of Google Classroom so that every student could read their friends' stories and give comments on them. They were given five days to do this task. On day six, the lecturer checked their answers and comments. It was continued by giving some feedback from the lecturer. The activity in this meeting can be seen in Picture 2 but the names and the pictures of the researcher and the participant were cut for keeping their privacies.
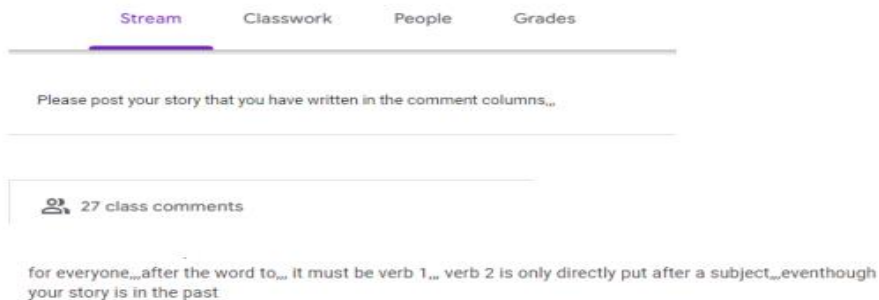
Picture 2. The second asynchronous activity

4. In the fourth meeting, the students have gathered again in the video conference on Google Meet. In this meeting, they had to do the grammar questions displayed by the lecturer in the Google Meet presentation menu. There were five questions to be answered. Picture 3 shows those five questions having been displayed on Google Meet.
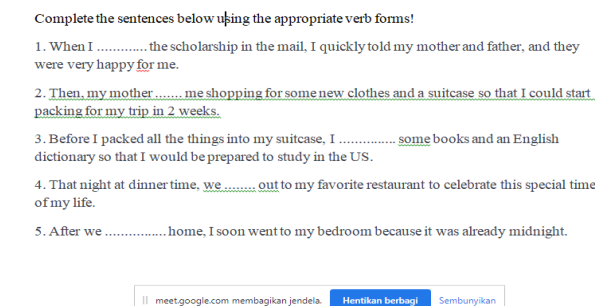
Picture 3. Grammar questions displayed on Google Meet

Meanwhile, the students had three minutes to think of the answer of every question. Afterwards, the lecturer pointed the names of the students randomly to

answer and to give the reason of their answer. This activity was followed by the lecturer's feedback and the students' questions and answers session.

Those were the steps in conducting the treatment of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in this grammar class. After the treatment was over, the researchers administered the grammar post-test in the next meeting. The following step that the researchers did was to calculate the statistical descriptive of the data from both the pretest and posttest. The results of the grammar pretest and post-test which were calculated based on the statistical descriptive can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Pretest	15	60	75	68.00	70	4.928
Posttest	15	70	90	80.67	80	6.230

Table 1 shows that the student's minimum score which was got in the pretest was 60 and the student's maximum score which was achieved in the post-test was 70. The maximum score in the pretest was 75 and the maximum score in the posttest was 90. That is why it can be known that there was an improvement in the students' average score from the pretest which was 68.00 to the post-test which was 80.67.

After finding out the results of the descriptive statistics data, the next step that the researchers conducted was finding out the normality of the data of the pretest and posttest scores. The normality data result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The Results of Normality Tests

	Kolmogrov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	.195	15	.128	.896	15	.082
Posttest	.209	15	.076	.910	15	.134

Based on the results of normality tests in table 2, it can be known that the Sig. of both Kolmogrov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk are higher than 0.05. Thus, it can be said that the data was in the normal distribution.

When the data had been normal, the data was tested for its homogeneity. The result of the homogeneity test is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Result of Homogeneity Test

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.446	1	28	.510

Table 3 shows that the Sig . of Levene Statistic is 0.510 which is higher than 0.05. It can be concluded that the data was homogeneous.

After the data were normally distributed and homogeneous, so the final step of calculation that the researchers had to do was to calculate the t-test, especially paired sample test. It was to test the hypothesis of this research. The summary result of this paired samples test can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. The Results of Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttes	-12.667	2.587	-19.000	14	.000

The results of paired samples test presented in Table 3 shows that Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.000. It was lower than 0.05. It means that the difference of the mean score of pretest and posttest was significant. It brings to the conclusion of this study that the implementation of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was effective for teaching grammar. In other words, it can be said that there was significant effectiveness of using blended synchronous and asynchronous learning to teach grammar so that the students' grammar competence became higher.

Discussion

The result of this research shows that the implementation of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning is effective for teaching grammar. This is caused by the strengths of both synchronous and asynchronous learning modes completing one another. These strengths could help the students improve their grammar competence well.

The first point of the application of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning that can be seen from this online grammar class is that this method is categorized as the student-centered method. It is supported by Cahyani et al. (2021) who state that blended synchronous and asynchronous learning creates a teaching and learning method which focuses on the students. So that all the activities of grammar learning were focused on the students. The students read and found the information in the grammar material by themselves. The lecturer only stimulated by giving some directions so that the students were easy to find the information that they needed. Besides, the lecturer gave some feedback on what they had done and discussed. This situation caused the students to be more autonomous in their learning of grammar. In addition, the students did not depend on their grammar lecturers anymore.

When blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was implemented in the online grammar class, the students got the learning activities which were authentic. According to Cahyani et al. (2021), one of the strengths of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning is that this blended model provides authentic learning activities. They brought their learning materials to their real life. It happened when they learned grammar both in the asynchronous and synchronous learning. The asynchronous learning in this research happened when the students read, listened, and comprehended the materials of grammar which were provided by the lecturer in the *bookcreator*. This asynchronous learning continued to give the summary of the patterns and the use of the grammar used in the story text in the assignment menu of Google Classroom. The process of discovering the grammar patterns and the grammar used in this step is one of the characteristics of authentic learning activities. The authentic learning activities continued when the students tried to create the sentence in the synchronous meeting by using the pattern that they had found. Their sentence was about their own experience. It enabled them to practice the grammar pattern that they had just discovered. Then, the activities of writing their personal stories using the grammar pattern of successive events in the past in the asynchronous learning also still became a part of the activities of authentic learning.

While doing the authentic learning activities in the asynchronous learning, especially the activities of finding the patterns and the usage of the grammar, the students were trained to use their critical thinking. According to Tathahira (2020), the students' critical thinking can be promoted through the use of online learning. In this case of the discovery of the grammar patterns and usage, the students did not answer carelessly. They thought and observed for several days to answer to their assignment. It also occurred when they had to give some comments on their friends' stories

related to their use of grammar patterns. Their critical thinking was also stimulated to be used. By using their critical thinking, the students would relate their ideas and the information provided around them when answering the questions or giving the solutions to the problems posed by their lecturer (Lopez-Perez et al., 2011). This critical thinking was also used when they created the sentence as their lecturer ordered in the synchronous meeting. They chose to create sentences that had a relation to their real life.

The feedback and the corrections from their friends and their lecturer also gave a big role in the success of their grammar learning. These kinds of giving feedback and corrections happened both synchronously and asynchronously. The feedback and corrections from their friends and their lecturer straightened as well as strengthened the information that they had got. The peer feedback coming from their friends could improve the quality of the students' learning because the students are allowed to reconstruct their information and knowledge through their social sharing and interaction (Bijami et al., 2013). In addition, Pan & Shao (2020) state that the teacher's online feedback has a positive correlation with learning motivation and learning engagement. If the students had a positive motivation and learning engagement, it could be said that the teaching and learning of grammar using blended synchronous and asynchronous caused the students not to be bored and forced. It was because in every meeting, the way they learned grammar changed. The asynchronous meeting was continued by the synchronous meeting. It was assumed not monotonous. They had a large time to complete their assignment in the asynchronous meeting. In the next meeting, they could get direct feedback or direct meeting in the synchronous meeting. This change could reduce the students' boredom in the grammar class. The students became more relaxed and fresh when joining their online classes. That is why the students' grammar knowledge became improved and their grammar competence got better.

The lecturer's feedback and their friends' feeback could complete and correct their knowledge of the grammar that they were studying. This could make them master the materials being learned well. Their comprehension about grammar became better. These facts prove the theory of Cahyani et al. (2021) stating that one of the advantages of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning is that the students could have better comprehension and mastery of the topic studied. When their comprehension and mastery of grammar were raised, automatically their grammar competence also became high.

CONCLUSION

The research finding revealed that the use of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning was effective for teaching grammar. The strengths of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning, such as facilitating the student-centered learning method, giving the students authentic learning activities, stimulating critical thinking on the students, and causing the good students' comprehension and topic mastery, existed in this study, especially in the remote teaching and learning of grammar. It is suggested to the English teachers or lecturers to implement blended synchronous and asynchronous learning when teaching their English courses remotely. This research finding also can be used as a consideration for the policy makers when deciding on the regulation of EFL online learning. Then, the other researchers are suggested to explore the implementation of blended synchronous and asynchronous learning in the EFL context more deeply.

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APPENDIX

The pretest and posttest questions on grammar.

Complete the sentences below using the appropriate verb forms!

1. After Sinta .... to school, her mother started cooking in the kitchen.
2. Before I .... anything, I always made a discussion with my parents.
3. I .... a bath after everyone in my house had slept last night.
4. My sister bought some vegetables in the hypermarket, then, she .... me to cook.
5. Soon after Andi .... the phone call from his parents, he directly met his landlord.
6. The bell ...... three times yesterday, then, he opened the door.
7. They were in a hurry to open their math books after their killer teacher .... them.
8. After finishing wrapping the birthday gift for her mother, Ani .... it to her mother.
9. Rendy .... breakfast before he drank the medicine.
10. Yudi .... his parents' permission before he accepted his job offer.